List of participants

President
Jari SAINIO, Region of Helsinki-Uusimaa

1st Vice-President
Annika SANDSTRÖM, County Council of Stockholm

Members of the Executive Committee
Erik BERGKVIST, Region Västerbotten
Wolf BORN, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Talvikki JORI, Southwest Finland
Richard SJÖLUND, Regional Council of Ostrobothnia
Anders ÖBERG, Norrbotten County Council

Supporting officers and external speaker
John KOSTET, Senior Advisor, Region Västerbotten
Evert KROES, Regional Planner, Stockholm County Council
Petter LUNDBERG, head of the the MediaCenter, Region Västerbotten (external speaker)
Krista TAIPALE, Head of Office, Helsinki European Office
Carl ROVA, Region Norrbotten

BSC Secretariat
Åsa BJERING, Executive Secretary
Lucille EHRHART, Policy Analyst
1. Opening of the Executive Committee meeting

1.1. Opening of the meeting - Mr Jari Sainio, President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

Mr Jari Sainio, President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, welcomed participants to the Executive Committee meeting. He warmly thanked Region Västerbotten for hosting the meeting.

Mr Erik Bergkvist welcomed members of the Executive Committee to Umeå.

Tour de table – current issues for BSC Members

Each participant was invited to raise current issues of specific relevance for its Region.

Mr Erik Bergkvist informed participants about the Swedish national position regarding the next programming period for post-2020.

Ms Krista Taipale stressed the worrying rumours regarding the future of European Territorial Programmes. In the future, the European Commission may merge the Baltic Sea Interreg programmes into one programme. Ms Lucille Ehrhart informed participants about the current work of the CPMR General Secretariat on the future of ETC. Based on a questionnaire on ETC send out to the Member Regions, the CPMR will develop policy messages that will be presented at the June Political Bureau in Estonia.

The Executive Committee took note of this information.

1.2. Approval of the agenda

The Executive Committee approved the agenda.

1.3 Approval of the minutes from the Executive Committee meeting, 16 January in Brussels

The Executive Committee approved the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting which took place on 16 January 2018 in Brussels.

1.4 CPMR Political Bureau in Patras (GR), 8-9 March 2018

Ms Annika Sandström, Mr Erik Bergkvist, Ms Krista Taipale and Ms Åsa Bjering who attended the CPMR Political Bureau in Patras updated Members of the Executive Committee about the discussions held during the event. Discussions focused in particular on the future of Cohesion Policy and the future of the EU budget. All CPMR documents adopted during the CPMR Political Bureau can be found here.
At the Political Bureau, CPMR Secretary General Ms Eleni Marianou announced that in light of the latest developments at EU level, the CPMR is working on a new Business Plan for 2019 onwards, which will be based on the needs of the Members. A first draft will be discussed during the Political Bureau in June in Pärnu. More information on the time plan is shown in the diagram above.

The Executive Committee decided that the outcome of the discussions on the added value of the BSC and the future of its Secretariat will be the contribution of the BSC to the CPMR work to develop a new Business Plan for 2019.

1.5 CPMR BSC Secretariat report, Ms Åsa Bjering

Ms Åsa Bjering delivered an oral report on the activities carried out by the BSC Secretariat since the last Executive Committee meeting in January. More information can be find on the BSC website. She also informed participants about the CPMR internal staff “Vision Group” meeting held early February which was an opportunity to discuss internal issues and the development of a CPMR Business plan.

1.6 Stepping up Communication with the European Parliament

Ms Åsa Bjering explained that the BSC Maritime Working Group will organise a meeting in the European Parliament on the topic of hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea. This event is co-organised with PA Hazard of the EUSBSR, the informal Baltic Sea Group in Brussels (the EU offices of the Regions and cities from the Baltic Sea Region in Brussels, currently coordinated by the EU office of Mecklenburg Vorpommern). MEP Ulrike Meißner (G/Alde), Chair of the European Parliament’s SEArica Intergroup, as well as MEP Miapetra Kumpula-Natri (FI/S&D), Chair of the European Parliament’s Baltic Sea Intergroup will be the MEPs that open the seminar. It is the intention of the Maritime Working Group and the BSC Secretariat that this cooperation will enhance the contacts of the Baltic Sea Commission with Baltic Sea MEPs. This is of relevance for the overall work of the organisation and especially so when the EUSBSR is going to be revised.
**Keynote speech:** Mr Petter Lundberg, head of the MediaCenter, Region Västerbotten, presented the development of remote teaching in Västerbotten to the Executive Committee. For more information, please consult the MediaCenter Region Västerbotten website. The PowerPoint presentation is available on the BSC website.

## 2. Feedback from the shortlist of political issues initiated at the Executive Committee Meeting in Brussels

### 2.1 Discussion

Members of the Executive Committee discussed the political issues identified as of particular relevance to the Baltic Sea Commission: transport, energy, maritime issues, Cohesion Policy, research and education etc.

The Executive Committee decided that this political discussion should be continued further in the coming months. A side meeting between the relevant politicians will be organised in the framework of the upcoming CPMR BSC General Assembly in Oulu to continue the discussions. Ms Annika Sandström is responsible for sending invitations to this meeting.

## 3. Future of the CPMR BSC Secretariat

### 3.1 Presentation of the two Discussion Papers on the added value of the BSC and the future of the BSC Secretariat by Mr Evert Kroes and Mr Wolf Born, representatives of the Task Force

**Mr Evert Kroes** presented the draft Discussion Paper on the added value and areas of improvement for the Baltic Sea Commission which is the outcome of the Task Force work. The documents that provided the basis for this discussion had been sent out to the Executive Committee prior to the meeting.

**Mr Wolf Born** presented the proposal developed by the Task Force on the future of the BSC Secretariat. The documents that provided the basis for this discussion had been sent out to the Executive Committee prior to the meeting.

Regarding Membership fees, the Finnish Members of the Executive Committee said that Finnish Regions are not ready to increase the fees as they are going through a territorial reform. This reform will have an impact on the financial capacity of Finnish Regions. Until the territorial reforms have come to an end in 2019, the Finnish Members do not want to increase the membership fees.

The Executive Committee decided:
1. **Regarding the location of the BSC Secretariat:**
   * This would be hosted in Brussels.
2. **Regarding the sessions of the General Assembly dedicated to the added value of the BSC and the future of the BSC Secretariat:**
   - to merge the two sessions into one session;
   - to change the structure of the session as proposed to the Executive Committee. This was further elaborated during agenda item 5.2 (see below);
   - to involve non-members of the Executive Committee in the panel discussion.

3. **Regarding the Discussion Papers on the added value of the BSC and the Paper on the future of the BSC Secretariat:**
   - A new Discussion Paper will be developed which combines the two current Discussion Papers. The new Paper will include a reference on the funding of the BSC Secretariat from 2020. It will also be included that an evaluation of the funding of the BSC Secretariat must be carried out and it should be explored that in the future the BSC Secretariat should be fully covered by the Membership fees.

4. **To propose to the General Assembly to give the new Executive Committee a mandate to make a decision on the recruitment of a new Executive Secretary for 2019/2020 or to offer a prolongment of the contract of the current Executive Secretary.**

It was announced that the Regions of Västerbotten and Norrbotten are willing to continue hosting the BSC Secretariat for 2019-2020.

Mr Wolf Born and Mr Evert Kroes are responsible for the updates of the documents.

Ms Åsa Bjering, in cooperation with Mr Wolf Born, Mr Evert Kroes and Ms Krista Taipale, is responsible for planning the programme items of the General Assembly to be in line with what was discussed and decided by the Executive Committee.


4.1 **Transport Working Group**

As **Mr Kai Holmberg**, Chair of the Transport Working Group, could not attend the Executive Committee Meeting, an oral presentation was delivered by **Ms Åsa Bjering** on the work of the Transport Working Group.

The Transport Working Group held a meeting on 15–16 February 2018 in Helsinki in the presence of **Ms Erja Tikka**, Ambassador of Finland for the Baltic Sea Region. During the meeting, it was decided that the BSC Transport Working Group would send a letter of commitment to a Project Platform Application of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme which has been developed by several BSC Members. The Executive Committee mandated the Transport Working Group to make this decision during the last meeting in Brussels. The decision on the approval of the project platform will be made in June.

The next meeting of the BSC Transport Working Group will be held on 5-6 April 2018 in Stockholm. It will be a joint meeting together with the North Sea Commission Transport Working Group. Discussions will focus on clean transport, third country connections, and aviation.
4.2 Maritime Working Group

As Ms Tiina Perho, Chair of the Maritime Working Group, could not attend the Executive Committee Meeting, an oral presentation was delivered by Ms Åsa Bjering on the work of the Maritime Working Group. The Maritime Working Group held a meeting on 7 March 2018, in conjunction with the seminar on SDG “Transforming the Baltic Sea Region” that many of the Members of the Maritime Working Group attended.

The Maritime Working Group, together with PA Hazard and the support of Ms Mia Petra Kumpula-Natri (FI/S&D), Chair of the Baltic Sea Intergroup of the European Parliament, will co-organise an event on Hazardous Substances in the Sea at the European Parliament on 5 September 2018 in Brussels. The event is planned for the morning and the idea is that the Maritime Working Group will organise an internal meeting in the CPMR offices in the afternoon.

4.3 Energy Working Group, Mr Richard Sjölund, Chair of the Energy Working Group

Mr Richard Sjölund, Chair of the Energy Working Group gave an oral presentation on the work of the Energy Working Group. He underlined that the Working Group is acting as a monitoring group of the Interreg project “Learning among Regions on Smart Specialisation”.

The next meetings of the LARS-project partnership will be held on 19-20 April 2018 in Vilnius and the Energy Working Group will have a short meeting the 15 May 2018 in Oulu.

4.4 Call for Chair and Vice-Chairs to be communicated at the General Assembly and sent out afterwards

Ms Åsa Bjering informed the Executive Committee that a Call for Chairs and Vice-Chairs for the Working Groups will be communicated during the General Assembly and sent out shortly after. According to the internal rules of the organisation, the mandate for the Chair and Vice-Chairs should be decided by the Executive Committee every second year. The decision will be made by the Executive Committee during autumn.

4.5 Update and discussion on activities and plans for Priority Area 1: Supporting the creation of a Smart Specialisation Platform, Mr Jonas Lundström, Coordinator of PrioArea 1

In the absence of Mr Jonas Lundström, Ms Åsa Bjering gave an oral presentation on the work of the BSC Priority Area 1. She informed the Executive Committee that the Baltic Sea Commission has sent a letter of support for the Interreg project platform application “the Baltic Sea Region Smart Specialisation platform” (Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme 2014-2020), as was decided at the Executive Committee meeting in January. A decision on the project application will be made in June.
The Executive Committee decided in March to formalise a MoU with PA Innovation and the Swedish Institute to organise a Baltic Leadership Programme for experts on Smart Specialisation. This is being worked on and should be finalised by the end of April at the latest.

Ms Åsa Bjering underlined that both the BSC Working Groups on maritime issues and energy have a strong focus on Smart Specialisation.

4.6 Update and discussion on activities and plans for Priority Area 2: The role of the Regions in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, Mr Anders Öberg, Coordinator of PrioArea 2

Mr Anders Öberg gave an oral presentation on the work of the BSC Priority Area 2. Ms Åsa Bjering presented the outcome of a workshop on the Agenda 2030 on the Baltic Sea Region which was held on 7 March 2018 in Stockholm. The workshop was co-organised by the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, together with Euroregio Baltic, the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the organisers of the Baltic Sea Future.

5. CPMR BSC General Assembly, Oulu

5.1 Practical information, including time line

Ms Åsa Bjering informed participants about practicalities regarding the upcoming CPMR BSC General Assembly. Practical information was sent out to Members on 15 February 2018.

5.2 Draft Programme

Ms Åsa Bjering updated the Executive Committee about the draft Agenda of the General Assembly.

The Executive Committee decided:
- To invite CPMR Secretary General, Ms Eleni Marianou, to connect the discussions on the added value of the BSC and the future of the Secretariat with the work of the CPMR General Secretariat and the process of developing a business plan;
- The notes of the discussions will be the contribution of the BSC to the CPMR reflection to develop a business plan and to the new BSC Executive Committee;
- To explore the possibility of inviting Mr Markku Markkula, Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions, and the President from Zeeland, to make a speech during the General Assembly; in order to get a perspective from a Region that has not yet chosen to be a Member of the Baltic Sea Commission.

5.3 List of Working Papers

Activity Report – process proposal
The Executive Committee approved the process proposal to make changes to the Activity Report which was presented by Ms Åsa Bjering. The final version of the Activity Report will be send out Members 2 weeks prior to the General Assembly.
Final Declaration – process proposal
The Executive Committee gave a mandate to the Preparatory Group to draft the Final Declaration. It was decided that the Preparatory Group will meet on 4 May 2018 in Brussels to finalise the drafting of the Final Declaration and the Activity Report.

5.4. Election (Call for President and Vice-Presidents document was approved at the last Executive Committee Meeting in January 2018)

The Call for President and Vice-Presidents was sent to all BSC Member Regions on 20 March 2018.

6. CPMR BSC Organisational Matters

6.1 Financial Report as of 28 Feb 2018

The Executive Committee approved the Financial Report of 28 February 2018, which was presented by Mr Anders Öberg.

6.2 Membership

Ms Åsa Bjering informed the Executive Committee that it is now official that the Association of Estonian Cities will nominate politicians to the CPMR, Baltic Sea Commission and Islands Commission. The key contact person dealing with the CPMR within this organisation is Mr Riima, Deputy Director of the organisation. They have already informed that they will nominate a politician to the Executive Committee and actively contribute to the work of the Baltic Sea Commission.

7. CPMR BSC - Communication Strategy

The Executive Committee decided to postpone this work after the General Assembly.

8. EUSBSR

8.1 EUSBSR Annual Forum, Tallinn

Ms Åsa Bjering informed the Executive Committee that the Baltic Sea Commission is, together with Policy Area Innovation of the EUSBSR, organising a seminar to present the creation of a Smart Specialisation Platform in the framework of the 9th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR on 4-5 June in Tallinn. The event will bring together several high-level guests, including Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Cretu.
8.2 Proposal on initiating a Task-Force dealing with the anticipated revision of the EUSBSR

The Executive Committee decided that a Task Force will be set up to anticipate the revision of the EUSBSR.

9. Any Other Business

9.1 Request to host the General Assembly, Executive Committee and Working Group meetings

An email invitation will be sent out to the Members to host different meetings in 2018/2019.

9.2 Information: Co-organising an event related to the CPMR Future of Europe Discussion together with the Swedish CPMR Regions in Almedalen, Sweden

The Swedish Member Regions of the Baltic Sea Commission are investigating the possibility of organising a seminar in Almedalen discussing the role of Regions in the future of the EU.

9.3 AOB

The Executive Committee discussed how to better engage with potential future Member Regions that want to take a more active role in the Baltic Sea Commission.

Mr Wolf Born said that in the future there should be further possibilities during Executive Committee meetings for exchange of best practices and knowledge between Regions.

10. Closing session

10.1 Next meeting

The new Executive Committee will meet at the General Assembly in Oulu and will be chaired by the newly elected President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission.

10.2 Calendar of the year

The timetable of BSC events is constantly updated on the BSC website. Please check it regularly for updated. Click here to open the document.